

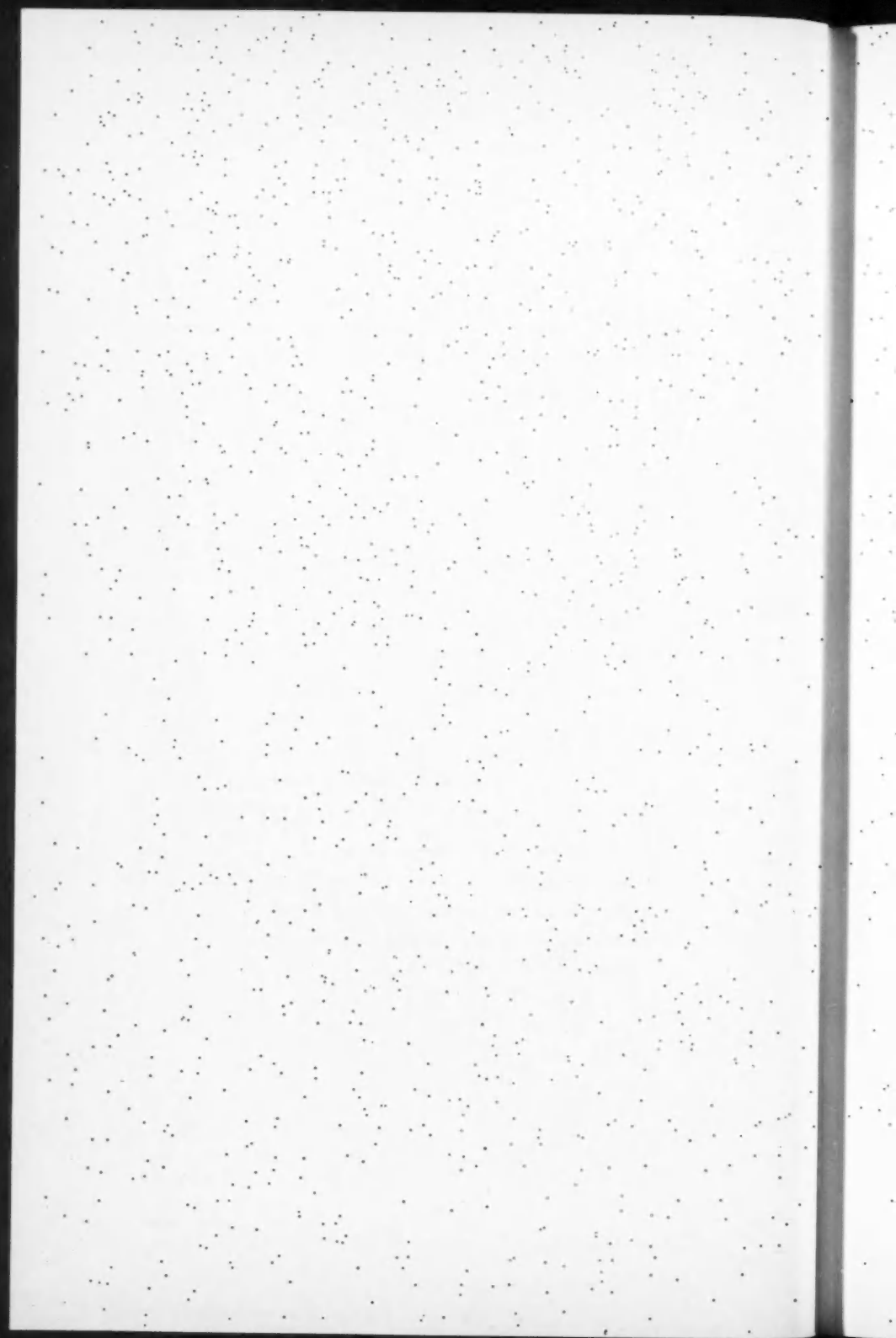
# **R**EFORM OF DELINQUENTS

by

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## REFORM OF DELINQUENTS

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STATE WORK CAMPS for reclamation of delinquent youths are receiving wide acclaim as an instrument for dealing with one of society's most troubling problems. The camps have been highly successful in the case of certain groups of carefully selected boys, but it has been emphasized that they cannot supply all the answers to the complex questions involved in juvenile delinquency. One of the most significant things about the camps is that they give prominence to a gradual change in correctional methods which is taking place generally in institutions for delinquents.

The change is away from incarceration, plus a certain amount of vocational training, and in the direction of treatment programs which take into account the individual needs of each offender. In this context the work camp assumes a place as one among many other facilities, such as the probation system, social case work, the mental hygiene clinic, and the training school, designed to meet the problems of particular groups of delinquents. In effect, the camp is another kind of training school, operating in a freer atmosphere and laying greater stress on the performance of socially useful work. It is a part of what the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency referred to recently as the "new look" in training schools. The subcommittee said in a report on Mar. 4, 1957, that the change originated several decades ago when "some states removed their training schools from the clutches of patronage and opened the door to trained leadership and trained staff."

Traditionally, the training or industrial school—once called the reform school—has been the dumping ground for youthful delinquents whose anti-social acts were so serious or so persistent as to compel confinement. The public in general was indifferent to what went on behind training school walls so long as the young outlaws were

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kept out of the community's way. But the rise in juvenile delinquency,<sup>1</sup> and particularly the tendency toward repetition of offenses, aroused public interest in the methods of the training schools. Reports that one-half of the inmates of adult jails are training school graduates have heightened this interest.

The public is usually of two minds on the handling of extreme delinquents. On one hand, there is a strong demand that authorities "get tough" with young hoodlums spoiled by the "softness" of the juvenile correctional system. On the other hand, public indignation has been equally aroused by reports of harsh conditions in training schools. Professional criticism of the old-style training school as a breeding place for adult criminals has been popularized by books<sup>2</sup> showing that oppressive or indifferent management of delinquents has increased their belligerence.

Neither the "soft" nor the "tough" approach has much meaning for the professional worker with delinquents. He views it as his job to correct defects in the personal development of miscreants. He does not judge a delinquent by the seriousness of his offense; he attempts to understand the sources of the offender's hostility to society and to find ways of making him want to behave. If this method is soft, the specialist defends it on the ground that it works.

#### SHIFT IN TYPES AND NEEDS OF YOUTHS IN CUSTODY

The training school population represents the residue of trouble-making children for whom all other agencies of reform, beginning with home and school, have failed. Nearly 1½ million children come to police attention every year, and half a million are brought into juvenile courts. One-half of the court cases are dismissed or otherwise adjusted. Around 185,000 juveniles are placed on probation annually, and approximately 25,000 are referred to other agencies. The remainder, some 40,000, are committed to institutions of the training school type, where they remain on the average for twelve months.

In earlier times, many of the training school inmates were youngsters who were more neglected than delinquent. With expansion of child welfare services and juvenile court

<sup>1</sup> Juvenile court cases increased 70 per cent between 1948 and 1955. The F.B.I. reported in April 1957 that there were 17.3 per cent more arrests of juveniles in 1956 than in 1955.

<sup>2</sup> For example: Albert Deutsch, *Our Rejected Children* (1950); Benjamin Fine, *One Million Delinquents* (1953).

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systems, it became possible to do a considerable amount of weeding out before bringing the training school into the picture. Courts now try to avoid committing a boy or girl to an institution unless other agencies have clearly failed to effect reform. The result is a striking change in the composition of the training school population. Many observers have noted that as other facilities have developed, the training school has tended to get a larger proportion of seriously disturbed delinquents and a smaller proportion of basically stable youngsters.

A psychiatrist who worked with more than 1,000 court-committed children between the ages of 9 and 16 at a New York training school for boys has asserted that 70 per cent of his cases showed "clinically significant emotional pathology." About 15 per cent of the boys had "overt neurotic symptoms (mainly phobias, anuresis, sleep disturbances, headaches, dizziness and various somatic anxiety symptoms)"; 2 to 3 per cent had "pre-psychotic symptoms—usually paranoid delusional trends, disorganized temper tantrums and anxiety attacks." The remainder were diagnosed as "neurotic character disorders of various types."<sup>3</sup>

Psychological tests of inmates at the Boys' Industrial School in Topeka, Kan., showed "20 per cent psychotic and pre-psychotic; 20 per cent neurotic; 20 per cent character problems; 20 per cent culturally deprived; 15 per cent primary adolescent disturbance; 2 to 5 per cent mental defective."<sup>4</sup> The director of re-education at one of the more advanced private schools reported that "a discouraging number of the wayward . . . cannot be reached by any means"; of those amenable to treatment, at least 30 per cent needed psychotherapy in addition to the general group re-education program.<sup>5</sup>

### TENDENCY TO DIVERSIFY CORRECTIONAL TREATMENT

The term "delinquent" is said to have a moral and legal meaning but to be "of little value in understanding the pathology or in devising methods of treatment."<sup>6</sup> Because delinquents show such a wide variety of symptoms, it is

<sup>3</sup> F. Gordon Pleune, "Effects of State Training School Programs on Juvenile Delinquents," *Federal Probation*, March 1957, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> William H. Cadman, paper presented at meeting of Kansas Psychological Association, Winfield, Kan., Apr. 27, 1957.

<sup>5</sup> S. R. Slavson, *Re-Educating the Delinquent* (1954), p. 49.

<sup>6</sup> Harris B. Peck and Virginia Bellsmith, *Treatment of the Delinquent Adolescent* (1954), p. 6.

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now believed they should be classified for purposes of treatment, not according to the seriousness of their offenses, but according to the nature of their personality defects.

Creation of a network of treatment facilities for all problem children, delinquent or not, is the modern trend. It is approved practice to place a delinquent in custody of a central state agency for assignment to the facility appropriate for his particular maladjustment at various stages in the rehabilitative process. More and more state welfare departments or special youth authorities are being given the task of overseeing a total program for each delinquent.

An official report on Pennsylvania's training school system, prepared for the state's welfare department, recommended no less than seven separate types of institutions for rehabilitating juvenile delinquents:

(1) A general training school for children 12 to 16 years old, to be housed in cottages and given a full program of school, work, recreation, and therapy.

(2) A smaller school for "highly explosive" boys and girls of the same ages in need of closer confinement and a specialized therapeutic program.

(3) An institution for "severely emotionally disturbed" children of 12 to 16 years who tend to be withdrawn and who would suffer from ordinary training school discipline.

(4) A training school for boys and girls 16 to 18 years old in need of the usual clinical treatment plus work experience.

(5) An institution for disturbed children 8 to 12 years of age, to be housed in cottages or to visit the institution daily for treatment.

(6) A residential school for mentally defective delinquents.

(7) A home for the "institution graduate."

The last-named would be a kind of hostel in the youth's home community, where he would not be under lock and key but would have constant guidance until he had become completely adjusted to society.<sup>7</sup>

#### GROWTH OF INTEREST IN FORESTRY AND RANCH CAMPS

The work camp is still another rehabilitative facility which is gaining favor. The Federal Bureau of Prisons for 17 years has maintained a forestry camp in Virginia, on the site of an old Civilian Conservation Corps camp,<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Government Consulting Service of the University of Pennsylvania Institute of Local and State Government, *Coordination of the Program of Institutional Care of Juvenile Delinquents in Pennsylvania* (January 1955), pp. 63-79.

<sup>8</sup> The C.C.C. camps were established in 1933 for jobless youths; delinquents and other misfits were barred.

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for boys aged 15 to 18 selected from the National Training School in Washington, D. C., or directly committed by the courts. Ten states—California, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Utah, Washington—have established similar camps, some within the last year or two. At least eight additional states—Mississippi, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Wisconsin—are seriously considering doing likewise.

The camp program has been most highly developed in California, which pioneered in this field a quarter-century ago. Today there are 21 forestry camps or ranches for delinquents in the state, three run by the California Youth Authority and most of the others by counties with state aid. Camp units are usually small, rarely housing more than 60 boys. In the country as a whole, hardly 1,500 out of the total of 40,000 training school inmates have been assigned to work camps.

Boys in the forestry camps are never locked up. They spend much of their time, frequently 35 hours a week, working with state foresters on various projects: reforestation, nursery development, fire fighting, general maintenance. The boys usually receive small sums for their labor. In Washington the state's forestry division pays \$1 a day; 50c goes into a fund for operating the camp, 25c into the boy's savings account, and 25c into his pocket for spending money. Boys at the federal camp receive \$3 a month. Although California has some ranch camps for boys as young as 13, camp assignments usually go only to older boys. The camps are sometimes criticized for lack of educational facilities, but a few of them have a full complement of teachers, counsellors, and other trained personnel.

Forestry camp enthusiasts think that one of the project's most beneficial aspects is the opportunity it gives for association of the boys with foresters, who represent an ideal figure appealing to the better nature of delinquents. Performance of socially useful work and the healthful conditions of outdoor living appear in themselves to promote the regenerative process. The U.S. Senate subcommittee was so impressed by the camp program that it recommended creation of a network of 30 federal camps in national forests. Numerous bills have been introduced in Congress to make federal aid available for state and local programs to

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combat delinquency; if any of them should be enacted, some of the new money unquestionably would go to camp programs.

The existing camps report unusual success in rehabilitating boys. Washington state asserts that less than eight per cent of its camp graduates have had to be sent back to institutions. Careful selection of campers accounts in part for the good record. Virtually all camps bar boys with serious personality defects and boys with bad records for arson, running away, or creating disturbances in an institution. On the whole, the camps have been found most suitable for healthy extroverts who do not get along well in either academic or vocational training programs at institutions, but who give evidence of latent good character. In some instances, the camp is essentially a probationary institution which serves as a bridge between incarceration and release. Michigan not only maintains a correctional camp for youthful offenders, but also began experimenting last year with a "probation recovery camp" which combines forestry work with vocational training.

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### **Shortcomings of the Training Schools**

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REFORM of delinquents through institutional treatment has advanced a long way in theory in recent years, but it has not gone forward as rapidly in practice. Training schools are faced with many problems—inadequate funds, lack of specialist personnel, overcrowding, lack of selectivity in assignment of delinquents to the schools. It is generally accepted that the first key to an effective program of reform is classification. This entails study and diagnosis of each case by experts (doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers) and use of their findings to determine the type of program most likely to correct the individual's difficulty. Actually the crowded dockets and meager staffing of many juvenile courts preclude such exacting evaluations. Few training schools, moreover, are equipped to do an effective classification job for themselves, much less to carry out indicated therapeutic programs.

Training schools for delinquents had their origin in a humanitarian effort to keep minors out of jail and in the



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belief that immature offenders were redeemable. The first institution of the kind in the United States was the House of Refuge, established in New York City in 1825 by the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents.<sup>9</sup> The children, some of whom were waifs scooped off the streets, were housed in a grim building which had been a troop barracks. The first publicly supported school for delinquents was established in 1847 in Massachusetts.

### EXPERIENCE WITH OLD-FASHIONED REFORM SCHOOLS

The philosophy governing programs of reform schools underwent little change for years. The primary purpose was to guard delinquents from the influences which had led them astray; to inculcate a respect for authority, and to teach inmates a trade. Rigid discipline, insistence on orderly behavior, religious exercises, and plenty of "busy work" were the chief program ingredients.

In the 1850s the idea took hold that regeneration of the young could be better achieved under a cottage plan of housing in a rural setting. One of the early state institutions, established in Lancaster, Ohio, in 1858, consisted of a group of log cabins, each housing 40 boys with a custodian known as an "elder brother." The youths worked on a farm 8½ hours a day. Recaptured runaways were punished by confinement in a dark cell for two weeks or by transfer to a penitentiary.

Commitment to an institution usually was for an indefinite term which might continue until the child reached his majority. Conditions varied from institution to institution, but even the best managed reform schools were essentially prisons for the young. The idea that life for an institutionalized delinquent should be deliberately made more arduous than that for a good boy living at home still persists to a considerable extent.

A survey of 109 state training schools, conducted by the U.S. Children's Bureau in 1953, disclosed that nearly all maintained formal codes of discipline designed to enforce conformity to institutional rules. Seventeen schools sanctioned use of corporal punishment; 13 penalized inmates by restricting their diet; 39 gave recalcitrants extra or onerous work assignments. Even in schools where corporal

<sup>9</sup> The House of Refuge continued to operate independently until 1932, when it was merged with a state vocational institution under jurisdiction of the New York Department of Corrections.

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punishment is officially barred, brutal treatment has been reported.<sup>10</sup>

#### DIFFERENCES IN TODAY'S SCHOOLS FOR DELINQUENTS

Despite public concern over juvenile delinquency, no intensive study of actual practices in the nation's 186 public (129 state and 57 local) and 133 private training schools for delinquents has been conducted. It is known that they vary widely in quality of accommodations and in types of programs, but it is not known to what extent the schools are applying modern concepts of delinquency reform.

Today's training schools fall into three general categories: (1) Prisonlike establishments whose chief aim is to teach young offenders a lesson; (2) custodial institutions operated on the theory that kindly supervision will have pervasive effects for the better; and (3) "clinically oriented" schools in which "the most modern techniques of psychological rehabilitation and re-education can be focused in a highly specific way on the individual problems of the [inmates]." <sup>11</sup>

Penal-type schools are least expensive to operate, but they have a poor record for reforming delinquents. Custodial institutions help some youths, especially those whose difficulties are the product of poor home environment, but they fail to benefit more deeply maladjusted children. Although clinical schools are the most expensive to run, their supporters insist that they are doing the most realistic job of rehabilitation. The U.S. Children's Bureau recently summarized the prevailing views of training school administrators as follows:

A few administrators see the training school primarily as a custodial agency, with treatment secondary. A few regard its basic function as educational and see the process of correction as an educative process. But leading thinkers in the field believe that the main purpose of institutional placement today is treatment and that training schools must be essentially treatment institutions with an integrated professional service, wherein the disciplines of education, case work, group work, psychology, psychiatry, medicine, nursing, vocational rehabilitation, religion, all play an important role.<sup>12</sup>

Some indication of how well public training schools meet

<sup>10</sup> Albert Deutsch, *Our Rejected Children* (1950), pp. 19-20.

<sup>11</sup> Melvin M. Muröff (clinical director of Boys' Industrial School, Topeka, Kan.), paper presented at meeting of Kansas Psychological Association, Winfield, Kan., Apr. 27, 1957.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Children's Bureau, *Institutions Serving Delinquent Children* (1957), p. 3.

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the accepted standards of a clinically oriented institution was given by the 1953 Children's Bureau survey. Although most of the 109 schools covered required a medical report on new inmates and 97 wanted some social background information, only 82 were interested in educational achievement, only 47 sought personality data, and only 42 required psychiatric information.

Only 19 per cent of the state training schools reporting to the Children's Bureau had a full-time doctor on the staff and only 6 per cent a psychiatrist; 33 per cent had a full-time psychologist and 61 per cent at least one social worker. Most institutions which utilize the services of specialists depend on part-time staff. But 63 per cent of the reporting schools did not have even a part-time psychiatrist, 40 per cent no psychologist; and 38 per cent no social workers.<sup>13</sup>

Even in better-staffed institutions, overloading of cases makes it difficult for the specialists to give more than perfunctory attention to most of the youngsters. A psychiatrist in a relatively well-staffed public institution in New York estimated recently that 75 per cent of the inmates never had more than routine consultations with the psychiatrist. Often the specialist's attention is necessarily directed to the more aggressive troublemakers, while withdrawn children, whose troubles may be more deep-rooted, are neglected.<sup>14</sup>

### EMPLOYMENT OF INADEQUATELY TRAINED CUSTODIANS

Members of the custodial staff of public training schools rarely have had the training necessary to participate effectively in general therapeutic programs outlined by specialists. Young people in an institution live in closer association with the custodians, chiefly house parents, than with the professionals. Yet few house parents are trained for the work. A psychiatrist has pointed out that "The cottage staff faces these most difficult problems in abnormal human behavior without the benefit of previous formal education in personality problems, emotional illness, or treatment techniques." In no other field are untrained people hired "to do a vital job requiring special knowledge and skill."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Children's Bureau, *Some Facts About Public State Training Schools for Juvenile Delinquents* (1956), p. 20.

<sup>14</sup> F. Gordon Pleune, "Effects of State Training School Programs on Juvenile Delinquents," *Federal Probation*, March 1957, p. 28.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

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The Children's Bureau survey showed that only a handful of the 1,718 day cottage personnel in the covered state institutions were college graduates; 286 had only a grammar school education. Low salaries and poor working conditions account in part for the difficulty of recruiting high grade personnel. Median salary for house parents in 1953 was only \$2,965 or \$1,994 with room and board.

Some institutions attempt to make up for this major shortcoming by offering in-service training for house parents, but it is difficult to put such programs into practice. House parents have many duties apart from juvenile therapy; fathers have maintenance chores to perform and mothers keep house for huge families. Little time is left for consultations with the professional staff. A lack of basic education on the part of house parents, combined with ingrained attitudes toward their charges, frequently works against acceptance of professional viewpoints.

Training of the specialists themselves is called into question at times. At a conference of experts in delinquency control, held at Madison, Wis., several years ago, training school superintendents complained that "Schools of social work do not properly prepare their graduates to work with delinquents in an authoritative setting." At the same time, it has been said that specialized courses in correctional work given in at least 20 colleges and universities have "the fatal flaw of failing to provide for adequate training in social case work and group work."<sup>16</sup>

Conflicts between the administrative and the specialist personnel of an institution are common. Sometimes arrangements for maintaining order conflict with treatment programs. The Madison conference pointed out that "administrators and professional workers have not yet jointly engaged in close scrutiny of what structures and procedures can best serve both the needs of the client and the protection of the community." The tug-of-war is even more pronounced when the specialists are from an auxiliary agency which supplies services to a training school but has little supervisory responsibility for the inmates.

#### OVERCROWDING OF SCHOOLS; FACTOR OF HIGH COSTS

Congestion is another major difficulty in the training schools. The 1953 survey underlined the overcrowding in

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Children's Bureau, *Training Personnel for Work With Juvenile Delinquents* (1954), pp. 4-5.

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many state institutions. Nineteen per cent of the schools reporting had more than 100 per cent occupancy, and another 22 per cent were 90 to 100 per cent occupied. Half of the schools had a capacity in excess of 200, which is considered the maximum for an effectively programmed juvenile institution. Few of today's training schools can meet the accepted standard of no more than 20 boys or girls to a cottage, and fewer in the case of "heterogeneous groups of children or those with serious personality disturbances."

Overcrowding invariably has deleterious effects. Houseparents can scarcely provide a warm, affectionate relationship with too many difficult youngsters under one roof. Congestion promotes irritability and makes regimentation necessary to maintain order, thus destroying any approach to a home atmosphere. A psychiatrist has pointed out that "Whereas the theoretical intention . . . of the cottage plan is to provide a constructive, corrective experience in family-like living, it becomes [under crowded conditions] more like a prolonged exercise in group discipline."<sup>17</sup>

Even when facilities are limited, institutional care is expensive. The Children's Bureau survey showed an average annual per inmate cost of \$1,985, but there was a wide range among the different training schools. The highest expenditure per capita was \$4,399, which reflected the added cost of maintaining small housing units and paying salaries to professional personnel. A per capita outlay of only \$439, at a training school in the South, stood at the opposite extreme.<sup>18</sup>

The cost factor accounts in part for current enthusiasm about forestry camps, which are far less expensive to operate. Washington state estimates that costs in its camp amount to \$2 a person a day less than costs in the state training school. A major reason for the lower costs is that the foresters, who oversee the work program, are paid out of state forestry department funds. In some camps, absence of teachers results in large budgetary savings. Even in camps with relatively full educational and therapeutic programs, the useful work done by the boys offsets a part of the costs. Minnesota, for example, estimates the annual

<sup>17</sup> F. Gordon Pleune, "Effects of State Training School Programs on Juvenile Delinquents," *Federal Probation*, March 1957, p. 29.

<sup>18</sup> The 107 public training schools which reported expenditures laid out a total of \$47 million in one year; about \$10.5 million went into capital improvements.

cost of its forestry camp at \$1,650 a camper, but if the value of the camper's labor is deducted at the going rate of \$1 an hour, the cost appears to be only \$380 a year.

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## Methods of Reclaiming Delinquents

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A DELINQUENT invariably enters an institution at the peak of his hostility to authority. Typically, he is an adolescent who has already accumulated a long record of offenses.<sup>19</sup> The judge may have told him that he is being sent away "for your own good," but the youngster usually feels that he is being punished, and punished unfairly.

[The delinquent] is seldom conscious of the cause-and-effect sequence of his crime and his punishment. Society may be firmly convinced of its right to . . . protect itself against those who attack it . . . [but] to him his arrest and incarceration are just further evidence of the injustices which have always pursued him.

These children generally have had less than their share of adult love and affection and more of punishment and sheer indifference. . . . It is not surprising that the child in detention looks on his new situation with apprehension and revolt in his heart.<sup>20</sup>

To impose harsh and punitive discipline on a child in this frame of mind may make him behave, out of fear, but the specialists say it does little to develop the inner discipline which is at the core of a satisfactory adjustment to life in the modern world.

### NURTURING OF RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY OF ADULTS

Although the personality disorders of delinquents may vary considerably, most have certain features in common. Experts have described delinquents generally as insecure, frightened children who believe "they must destroy or be destroyed." Invariably, authority is regarded as a natural enemy. The primary defect accounting for this attitude appears to be the absence of a constructive relationship with an adult in position to exercise authority. Many delinquents come from broken or otherwise disordered homes, but even a conscientious parent in a fairly stable

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<sup>19</sup> The Children's Bureau 1953 survey of 109 state training schools, housing 18,392 young people, showed that the largest number—8,186—were 15 or 16 years old. Nearly 4,000 each were in the 13-14 and 17-18 age groups, and 381 were over 18. Almost three-fourths of the inmates were boys.

<sup>20</sup> Frank J. Cohen, *Children in Trouble* (1952), pp. 7-8.

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and well-provided home may fail to establish himself in the child's eyes as a worthy source of authority.

According to this premise, the modern correctional institution should be conceived of as a controlled society where a delinquent youngster may establish the salutary relationship with adults that he has failed to establish on the outside. The most important regenerative feature of a training school is the general atmosphere created by the attitude of staff members toward their young charges. Above all, it is contended, the adults must try to convince the boys and girls that they are there to be helped, not penalized.

A cardinal rule is that the anger and hostility of the child must never be countered with similar expressions of ill feeling by the custodian. Rather, the adult, by displaying patience and a sympathetic recognition of the compulsive drives behind bad behavior, and by standing ready to offer help in overcoming these drives, is supposed to present an example of strength and good will which will help to win the child's admiration and trust. Eventually, the theory runs, the delinquent will learn the satisfactions to be gained by setting limits to his ornery behavior.

To help dissipate the feeling that the institution is a prison, an effort is made to provide a daily program which will give the inmate an opportunity to take part in all the normal activities of other young people. His cottage is his home base; he goes to school, participates in recreational activities of the usual sort, engages in free group play, takes excursions, even has time to himself. But each activity is planned so as to give the youngster experiences which will contribute to the therapeutic program worked out individually for him. The objective is not to impose external controls (except when necessary in an emergency) but to develop latent capacity for self-discipline.

The effectiveness of this approach to delinquency has been demonstrated in a number of institutions, some of them privately endowed, which have had the funds and staff to apply the newer techniques and to study their results. A philosophy of redemption is at the root of much modern penal reform for delinquents of all ages. It is now being applied in correctional institutions for youthful offenders of ages beyond the jurisdiction of the juvenile court system.



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The superintendent of a New Jersey reformatory recently described the ideal correctional institution as a place where "boys and men in trouble . . . can eliminate, slowly and painfully perhaps, those many and behavior-controlling feelings of resentment and hostility which have been so many months building and festering." Members of the ideal staff "must be neither condemning, nor sadistic, nor moralistic, but present a consistent front of constructive optimistic helpfulness." Their daily job is "to relieve tension, alleviate overwhelming guilt, dissipate overpowering feelings of inadequacy and helplessness"; and they must always evince "unshakable faith in the ability of offenders to change for the better."<sup>21</sup>

#### PSYCHOTHERAPY FOR INMATES OF TRAINING SCHOOLS

The humanitarian approach to delinquency reform has a long history, but it is only in the past decade or two that the institutions have begun to reinforce it with the specific techniques of case work and psychotherapy. The most important influence on training schools in recent years has come from psychiatry, which finds the roots of anti-social behavior in distortions of the individual personality.

Reporting on development of a modern correctional program through the past two decades at the Hawthorne-Cedar Knolls School at Hawthorne, N. Y., the former director of re-education there recalled:

Before we knew our children as we do now and began to understand their personality makeup and the extent of their emotional disturbance, we were at a loss to comprehend the inability of many children to take advantage of the rich opportunities for living which were offered to them. We soon realized that . . . these children need psychotherapy before they can take advantage of the special opportunities in education, recreation and social experience which are put before them.<sup>22</sup>

It is now recognized that an effective program to re-educate delinquents requires extensive use of the services of social workers, psychiatrists, and psychologists. Such services for delinquents are about the same as those available to non-delinquent misfits in a mental health clinic or a residential institution for the emotionally disturbed.

The case worker maintains a continuing relationship

<sup>21</sup> Albert C. Wagner, "A Modern Institutional Program for the Youthful Offender," *Federal Probation*, March 1956, pp. 23-24.

<sup>22</sup> S. R. Slavson, *Re-Educating the Delinquent* (1954), p. x.



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with a certain group of cases, helps each child to solve problems as they arise from day to day, and interprets the child's needs to the rest of the staff. The case worker works also with the delinquent's family to promote an improvement of home conditions against the day when he returns. The psychiatrist and psychologist cooperate to diagnose each inmate's basic disorder and determine whether he needs intensive therapy; they conduct special treatment sessions with the children, either singly or in groups, and advise other staff personnel on ways to deal with each child.

Many institutions have found group therapy useful in helping children to get rid of tensions, break through a hard shell of belligerence, and obtain a more realistic grasp of what society expects of them. The Children's Bureau manual on training schools points out that "a major therapeutic value in these [group therapy] sessions is the freedom and security of the group atmosphere which alleviates the restrictive atmosphere of the institution."<sup>23</sup>

Group therapy is less costly than individual psychiatric treatment and for some young people has proved more effective. The warden of the New Jersey reformatory for youthful offenders says his experience indicates "favorable response to group therapy on the part of at least 70 per cent [of the participants] and a pronounced salutary response on the part of at least 35 per cent."

### APPLICATION OF FLEXIBLE DISCIPLINARY MEASURES

The public is inclined to be skeptical of the psychiatric-social worker approach to delinquency, regarding it as a soft method of dealing with youngsters who are a real menace to society. Proponents of the newer methods, not considering them soft, emphasize that control remains a basic objective. The major innovation is an attempt to develop a healthier outlook on life in place of a temporary suppression of anti-social impulses.

Discipline is still a major tool of the re-educative process, but it is a flexible discipline, administered according to the prospects of making a favorable impression on the particular boy or girl, rather than a rigid discipline based on a code of do's and don'ts to which all must conform or be punished. The newer approach follows the theory that absolute conformity to rules is beyond the power of some

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Children's Bureau, *Institutions Serving Delinquent Children* (1957), p. 55.

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children at certain stages and that punishment is useless unless the child recognizes it as just.

Deprivation of privileges is the most favored form of punishment, but the specialists say that the privilege taken away must never be one which contributes to a delinquent's regeneration. Although a youngster may become so obstreperous that it is necessary to lock him up, he should not be placed in a cell or kept in isolation for a lengthy period. Even in segregation, a difficult child should be helped to regain his equilibrium so that he may rejoin the group as soon as possible.

Corporal punishment is regarded as the poorest form of discipline. Although a spanking may seem the proper form of punishment at times, leaders in correctional work believe it merely reinforces a delinquent's tendency to express his feelings in violence. Condoning of corporal punishment by institutional authorities, moreover, may encourage abuses. Some schools maintain merit and demerit systems, or reward better-behaved youngsters by housing them in special-privilege cottages, but many authorities think such measures put undue pressure on children and create resentment.

#### RESEARCH ON THE VALUE OF CORRECTIONAL PROGRAMS

Few statistics are available to establish whether the newer methods work better than the old. No controlled comparative studies of different types of institutions have been made to determine the advantages of one program over another. Personal accounts by specialists in the more modern institutions generally contain many striking cases of severely distorted delinquents finding their way to a good life under scientific guidance. In many instances, children or youths who did poorly in school before they were institutionalized improved markedly as a result of achievement in the protected classroom and workshop of the training school.

The growing number of research projects in the correctional field may shed more light on this question. The U.S. Public Health Service's Institute of Mental Health is studying a group of aggressive children with typically delinquent behavior patterns to find the roots of their troubles and the best ways to deal with them. California has established a research department with a \$70,000 annual budget

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under its Youth Authority. Current projects include a study of the institutional treatment of girls aged 18 to 21. A special commission on juvenile justice is reviewing California's juvenile court laws and the handling of 16 and 17-year-old delinquents.

Utah is comparing the results of intensive case work on a selected group of training school inmates with the progress of a comparable group to whom the services have not been extended. The Illinois State Training School for Boys is studying the motivations of different types of young people described as "leaders, followers, and isolates." The National Training School for Boys in Washington, D. C., is trying to evaluate various treatment techniques, including group therapy.

Oregon's MacLaren School for Boys is making studies to determine the appropriate length of stay for particular cases and the degree of restraint compatible with effective treatment. Massachusetts is studying its runaways. Hawaii is attempting to compare the behavior of delinquents under ordinary industrial school treatment with that of delinquents undergoing specialized therapy with chlorpromazine.

A three-year study, nearing completion, by the State Training School for Boys at Warwick, N. Y., has dealt with the possibilities of broadening professional leadership in the correctional institution. It has been described as "the most ambitious study attempted in the training school field to date," and its findings may have "important ramifications throughout the entire juvenile correctional field."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Donald G. Blackburn (Consultant on Training Schools, U.S. Children's Bureau, Delinquency Division), address, Ohio Citizens' Council, Columbus, Ohio, June 11, 1957.

